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## Notes on the nesting of the Red-billed Curassow *Crax blumenbachii*

by D. M. Teixeira and D. W. Snow

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On 15 November 1979 we had the rare opportunity to observe the Red-billed Curassow *Crax blumenbachii* at its nest in one of the last refuges of this rarest and least known curassow, the Sooretama Biological Reserve (Linhares, Espirito Santo, 19° 10'-19° 17'S, 40° 0'-40° 15'W). *C. blumenbachii* is a remarkable endemic of southeastern Brazil, previously found in southern Bahia, eastern Minas Gerais, Espirito Santo and northern Rio de Janeiro. No more than 12 skins are known (Vaurie 1968) and, except for the studies of Sick (1964, 1970), almost nothing is known of its habits.

The nest was sited 6 m up in an obliquely leaning tree, one of a group growing from the water at the edge of a lagoon. In shape and composition the nest resembled those of other species of *Crax* (Delacour & Amadon 1973), being a rather simple rounded platform constructed of thin sticks (2 mm in diameter and of irregular length), about 50 cm in diameter and solidly based on an arboreal termite nest. There were dry leaves and old feathers between the maze of sticks, especially near the centre of the nest. Although the platform was rather thick, the upper parts of the eggs were visible from the ground from one side. The whole nest, however, was shaded and well concealed by the surrounding foliage.

There were 2 eggs, white with rough shells stained by contact with the vegetable matter of the nest. They measured 92 x 61 mm and 91 x 64 mm and weighed 196 and 193 g respectively. Only the female was seen to incubate, the male usually keeping its distance. The female when incubating was extremely shy, flying silently away at our distant approach unless great care was taken and she once took 5 hours to return. When returning she surveyed the surroundings warily as she came closer, sometimes walking on the ground and sometimes climbing among the branches. When on the nest she became very inconspicuous, with the tail held horizontally and the neck retracted.

The only other information on the breeding of this species that we were able to obtain at Sooretama was that some birds had well-grown young (around 100 days old) at the time we found the nest with eggs. Additional information on the breeding of *C. blumenbachii* has been obtained from birds nesting in captivity (Teixeira & Antas 1982, Teixeira & Sick 1981).

The diet includes insects, seeds and many fruits, most of the latter picked from the ground, but sometimes also from trees. At Sooretama, fruits of *Eugenia* (Myrtaceae), *Ferdinandusa* (Rubiaceae) and *Eschweilera* (Lecythidaceae) are eaten, but *C. blumenbachii* is also fond of some kinds of tender leaves and a characteristic sign of their foraging is the presence of bushes with their leaves half eaten.

*C. blumenbachii* is one of the 3 most endangered Brazilian species of Cracidae (Sick 1972, Sick & Teixeira 1979), its known range now being restricted to the still forested parts of southern Bahia and two localities in Espírito Santo (the Sooretama Reserve and the "Fazenda Klabin", município de Conceição da Barra). Although officially protected since 1967, the species is still decreasing as a result of illegal hunting and the continued deforestation of its already much reduced range in southern Bahia. If this situation does not change, it will probably be confined to two or three islands of forests in the near future.

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## IN BRIEF

### Nomenclatural notes on the phalaropes

It is widely understood that, in the *Systema Naturae*, Linnaeus signified those specific names that he intended as nouns in apposition to the generic name by the use of a capital initial letter. Such names do not change their ending, no matter what the gender may be of the name of any genus to which they may be transferred. In a few instances, this Linnaean convention has been overlooked, and the gender of a specific name incorrectly altered. I pointed this out (Parkes 1958, *Auk* 75: 479) in the case of *Lanius Garrulus* Linnaeus, which was incorrectly changed to "garrula" by many authors after the waxwing was transferred to the feminine genus *Bombycilla*.

Oberholser (1974, *The Bird Life of Texas*: 981) called attention to a similar